The Promise and Advantages of Christ's Presence with his Church.

A

SERMON

Preach'd before the Reverend

Archdeacon & Clergy

OF THE

County of *BEDFORD*,

AT THE

VISITATION

Held at the Town of *Bedford*, on the 27th of *April*, 1710.

By *PAWLET St. JOHN*,
Rector of *Yelden*, and Chaplain to the Right Honble *PAWLET* Earl of *Bolinbrook*.

Publish'd at the Request of Mr. Archdeacon *and the* Clergy.

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To the Reverend

Mr. *Thomas Franks*, Archdeacon,

And the Reverend

Clergy of the County of *Bedford.*

Reverend Brethren,

THE unexpected Honour you have done this plain Discourse, in Your Request that I would Print it, as it will more than justify its Appearance in the Publick, so was it no doubt intended to assure us, That a Man may Preach in Defence of the Authority You have receiv'd, and of the Character you adorn, not only without Offence, but even with some Degree of Approbation, in Your Presence: Never, I presume, with less just Offence; never, I trust, with more deserv'd Approbation, than at a Time when the Enemies of our Profession are so outragiously Insulting it, and some of our own Order (we thank 'em) would dissuade us from Defending it.

The Furiousness of a Zeal, intemperate in its Warmth, and indecent in its Expressions, We leave to another Cause, and to Adversaries who perhaps may need it more, and whom it better may become. But when the Despisers of our God are so daringly affronting him, both in his Person, and in his Ministry, then tamely to stop our Mouths, and hold in our Breath, and keep Silence even from good Words, *must needs be* Pain and Grief *to the Spirit of a Christian,*

who dares profess himself concern'd for either: Then for Fear of the Many, *or for the Favour of the* Great, *to Preach coldly against Vice, and with Tenderness against Infidelity; and out of pure Respect to the* Persons *of the Ungodly, to caress the* Principles *by which They would destroy us: This, in my Opinion, is none of the clearest Arguments of* some *Mens Integrity; and as little, I conceive, of that Excellent* Moderation, *They so clamorously pretend to.*

A just Abhorrence of such pernicious Principles, and of so Servile a Compliance, will, I hope, appear almost in ev'ry Page of this Discourse: The only Recommendation I dare mention in its Favour: But a Recommendation with You, My Brethren, *of all others, apparently the most Considerable; since nothing, I am sensible, but an Opinion of its Honest Plainness, and its Well-meant Simplicity, could move you to desire it in this manner from,*

Gentlemen,

Your most Affectionate Brother,

and most Humble Servant,

Pawlet St. John.

MATTH. xxviii. 20.

----And lo, I am with you always, even unto the End of the World.

THESE Words are probably ſome of the laſt our Bleſſed Saviour ſpake, when he was now about to *leave the World, and return unto the Father.*

The Work which his Father had given him to finiſh, he had eminently fulfill'd; perform'd whatever was requir'd of him, as our *Prophet* that he ſhould teach, or as our *Prieſt* that he ſhould ſuffer: And not only ſo, but by the Power of his Reſurrection alſo abundantly confirm'd the Truth of his Doctrine, and the Satisfaction of his Sacrifice. And therefore knowing, that in Reward of his Obedience, the Father had now *given all things into his Hands*, and *exalted him* to *be Prince and Saviour* of the Church which he had purchas'd, *Acts* 5. 31. he accordingly begins in the 18th Verſe of this Chapter, publickly to declare the Extent and Authority of the Character he had aſſum'd: *All Power*, ſays he, *is given unto me, both in Heaven and in Earth*: And then as a ſubſequent Act of this Authority, he proceeds in the next Verſe to iſſue out Commiſſions, and commands his Apoſtles *to go teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*: And Laſtly, to aſſure his Church, that he was not more its *Prince* to govern, than its *Saviour* to defend it, He goes on to tell them in the Words of my Text, That all this Power of his, as he had obtain'd it

for

for their sake, should be employ'd in their Protection. *And lo, I am with you always, even unto the End of the World.*

What Promise now more gracious or express than this, could our Saviour *Christ* have made to his Apostles, upon his leaving of the World? What Assurance less than this could ever have supported them in the Labours of its Conversion? The unexpected Death and Sufferings of their *Messias*, had pretty well check'd their Dependance on a Temporal one: Nay, our Saviour too himself, had taken more than ordinary Pains to undeceive them in this Particular; had explain'd to them over and over again the Nature of his Kingdom, and the Difficulties of their Employment, and told them expressly before-hand, what Usage and Opposition they were like to meet with from the Lusts, and Prejudices, and Powers of the World; and now to send them out into the midst of all this Violence naked and expos'd, and unprovided of every thing, but of Patience to endure it; and not only so, but himself to be shortly taken from them, at a time when his Presence would be more immediately necessary, what *Fear* and *Sorrow*, do we think, must *fill their Hearts* at so discouraging a Prospect? And therefore the better to prepare them for this Hour, our Saviour, we may observe, had very frequently acquainted them not only with the Certainty, but the Advantages also of his Departure from them. *Ye have heard*, says he, *John* 14. how *I said unto you, I go away: But let not your Heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*: Be assur'd, *I will not leave you comfortless.* I must, 'tis true, be sometime absent from you in *Body*; but know, that in *Spirit* I am

am present with you, and that you are still as much as ever within the Compass of my Care, and the Benefits of my Influence. And so again in the 16th Chapter of that *Gospel*, he goes on to let them see, *that his abiding with them any longer in the Flesh, was not so very needful* for them as they imagin'd; nay, that it was not only *safe*, but *expedient for them that he should go: For if I go not away*, says he, John 16. 7. *the Comforter will not come; but if I depart, I will send him to you*: As if he had said, My short Departure from you for a Season, instead of dissolving, will improve the Union betwixt my Church and me: For yet a little while, and again I come unto you; not as you now behold me, in my Body, to be *with* you only as before, *but by the Spirit of Truth, which I will send you from the Father*, I come, and *enter* in, and dwell *within* you; Your *Comforter* to defend you in danger, and support you in Affliction; and your *Advocate* also, to give Testimony to your Doctrine, and Assistance to your Ministry.

This seems, in short, to be the Meaning of that Promise our Saviour Christ had so frequently made to his Apostles, *whilst he was with them in the World*, and of which he now again assures them upon leaving it: And that the Benefit of this Promise was not (as some will have it) to expire with those to whom it was at first deliver'd, but for ever to descend upon the Persons of their Successors, and to the Consummation of all things, is so very evident, both from the Nature of our Lord's Design, and the Clearness of his Expression, that 'twere needless to evince it. Unto us, no doubt, my Brethren, the present Ministers of the Christi-

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an Church, was this Promise given, as well as unto them; and in some Sense also, to every private Christian, as well as unto us: Every private Christian, as he is a Member of Christ's Body, claims Union with him, as his Head; He feels him in his Graces, he perceives him in his Sacraments: And if he takes but care to seek him, as he ought, may find him at all times ready and at hand, to support and carry him through the Difficulties of Life, and the Duties of his Station. But because the Benefits of this Promise are made good to private Christians in a different Measure, and to another Purpose; And because the Venerable Assembly now before me, seems at this time more especially to require it of me, I shall confine my self at present to consider it purely with Relation to the Governors and Pastors of the Christian Church, to whom no doubt it was immediately directed, and to whose Successors in the Ministry, it was most assuredly design'd by our Saviour to extend.

Our Saviour's Presence therefore with his Church may, I think, not improperly be consider'd in these Three Respects.

First, In Respect of the Authority conferr'd by Christ himself on the Persons of the Apostles, and for ever to continue with their Successors in the Ministry.

Secondly, In Respect of the Grace and Assistance of his Holy Spirit, proportionable always to the Occasions of his Church, and the Execution of its Offices: And,

Thirdly and Lastly, In Respect of that immediate Providence and Protection, by which he has graciously undertaken to provide for its Security.

Less

Less than this, I am sure, we cannot fairly understand (if there be any thing at all we mean to understand) by our Saviour's Promise; and if we allow it but our Security for these Advantages, 'twill be needless, I presume, to mention any more.

And *First* then, Let us consider the Presence of our Saviour with his Church, in respect of the Authority conferr'd by Christ himself on the Persons of the Apostles, and for *ever to continue* with their Successors in the Ministry.

'Twas the peculiar Design and Character of the Christian Church, that it should be larger in Extent, and closer in Communion, and longer in Duration, than any one Society in the World had ever been before. Now the Increase and Nourishment of so vast a Body in its full Proportion, and to so remote a Period, was the Work of *many*, and no otherwise to be effected, but by such regular Communication of Power and Authority, without which 'tis not possible indeed for any Society, from the widest Empire to the narrowest Family, to be settled or preserv'd. For altho' the End of this Institution, and the Nature of its Privileges were properly Spiritual, and had relation chiefly to another World, yet the Members that should compose it, were the Inhabitants of this: The Sacrament of their Admission, the Signs of their Communion, and the Policy of their Government, were Visible and External, and requir'd as much the visible Authority of Laws and Officers for its Outward Administration, as that of any other Society whatsoever. And therefore Christ, (as the Apostle speaks *Eph.* 4.) to the end that *the Church his Body* being *fitly joyn'd together, and compacted*, might *increase*; *gave some Apostles*,

postles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, and for the Work of the Ministry. He gave them, I say, and to all these Officers, some Measure of Authority for the Service of his Church; not fully, and at once to all, but at several times, and with regard to its Occasions.

As long as the Borders of *Judea* were the Boundaries of his Kingdom, and himself presided personally in its Management, a less Communication of these Powers was sufficient: And accordingly we find that the Twelve whom he chose, *that they might be always with him*, and the other Seventy *whom he appointed also*, had at first no more in Commission from him, but only to Preach the Gospel, and Baptize Believers, and perform the ordinary Ministerial Offices of attending upon his Person, going out upon his Errands, and making way for his Reception. But when afterwards our Saviour's Death, instead of fixing the Period of his Reign, had on the contrary enlarg'd the Bounds of his Dominion; and when upon his Resurrection, the whole World was now become as properly his Kingdom, as the little Country of *Judea* was before; he found it necessary then proportionably to add to the Number of his Ministers, and to the Extent of their Commission. The Apostles were now immediately upon our Lord's Ascension, not only to preach in his Name, but to govern in his Absence: And because no less a Power was necessary to support his Church, than what had first establish'd it, whatever Authority he had received of the Father, he transferr'd upon his Successors: The same Powers, to all Intents and Purposes the very

very same, by which himself had acted whilst he dwelt amongst them; more especially that of enacting Laws, and of remitting Sins; the Exercise of which he had hitherto reserv'd as the more especial Acts and Distinctions of his Prerogative. *As my Father hath sent me*, saith our Saviour to his Apostles, *John* 20. 21. *so send I you*, on the same Design, and with the same Authority. Not that our Saviour Christ, by any Communication of Power to his Apostles, must be thought thereby to have resign'd one Tittle of his own. The Throne of *David*, we know, is incapable of a Vacancy, and exclusive of a Successor, nor must it, *till all things be made subject unto him*, by Christ himself be surrender'd to the Father. And therefore *tho' the Lord had prepar'd his Seat in Heaven, 'twas his Kingdom still that govern'd over all*, Psal. 103. 19. The Delegates he left behind to represent him, were no otherwise to act than by Commission from him: The Declarations they publish'd, the Pardons they pronounc'd, ran all as formally in the Sovereign's Name, and were as much to be esteem'd his proper Acts, and Deeds, as tho' himself had still been visibly present with his Church, and assisted at the passing them.

And that his Church might never want the Benefits of his Promise, nor the Support of his Authority, to uphold its Government, and to assure it of his Presence, he suffer'd it not to fail with the Apostles, but caus'd it by the fix'd Succession of a perpetual Ministry, like his own *unchangeable Priesthood*, to *abide for ever*.

The *Vessels* in which this Treasure was repos'd, were *frail and earthly*, *taken from among Men*, and

by reason of Death not suffer'd to continue long; and therefore to preserve his own Authority from the same Mortality themselves were subject to, he commanded his Apostles not only to make use of it themselves, but to derive it upon others. And (Blessed! for ever Blessed be his Goodness for it) nothing has yet been able to interrupt its *Course*; but even at this distance of time, the Springs from which it rose, and the Channels that convey'd it, are so clear and undisturb'd, that one would really wonder how even at this time of Day, there should be found in any Man acquainted with Antiquity, the Ignorance to mistake, or the rashness to usurp it.

For what indeed could our Saviour have done more, to secure the Character of his Ministry from Usurpation and Contempt? What Care and Caution did he use in every Step, to prevent, if possible, the Schisms and Heresies of all succeeding Ages; and in a more particular Manner, the Corruptions of our own?

To put it past Dispute, whether the *Call* of his Apostles were *from Heaven*, or *of Men*; he so contriv'd it, that the very Stile of their Commission, and the Solemnity of their Inauguration, should be almost in every Particular exactly like his own: To convince the World, that the Powers of his Church were purely independent, and not as our Modern Despisers call them, *a Creature of the Civil*; He introduc'd them in Opposition to the Secular Authority; and to cut off from it all Pretensions to any the least share in their Establishment, refus'd for two whole Ages together, to admit of its Protection.

To

To let Men see how respectful they should be to the Sacerdotal Dignity, and how afraid withal *to take this Honour to themselves*, upon the fond Presumption of a private Call, or an extraordinary Qualification, *Christ glorify'd not himself to be made an High-Priest, till he was call'd of God*, Heb. 5. 5. and by the publick Designation of the Spirit at his Baptism more immediately endued *with Power from on High.*

And Lastly, That we might never want a Regular Admission to these Holy Offices, nor the Means of discerning what is Regular, He has lodg'd a standing Power of Conveyance with the Bishops of his Church: An Order in the Ministry so apparently distinguish'd from the other two, that for above Three Hundred Years together, we read not of one Heretick that attempted to confound them: An Order so Providentially preserv'd by Christ himself, under all the Confusion and Disorder that hath happen'd since, that neither Papal Usurpation, nor Secular Encroachment, has been able to abolish it; and by which we trust, he will still continue, in spight of any new Attempts from Faction or Infidelity, to be *with us always, even unto the End of the World.*

Let us now in the Second Place, consider how Christ makes good this Promise to his Apostles, in respect of the Grace and Assistance of his Holy Spirit, proportionable always to the Occasions of his Church, and the Execution of its Offices.

I will not leave you comfortless, I will come again unto you, said our blessed Saviour, *John* 14. 18. to his disconsolate Apostles before his leaving of the World. Nor was the Lord unmindful *to deal graciously*

ously with his Servants, according to his Word; but within a very few Days after his Ascension from them, made haste to give it a most remarkable Accomplishment; when the Spirit of Truth which he sent them from the Father, *to abide with them for ever*, and to assure them of his Presence, came down, and rested visibly upon them, and by the Signs and Wonders it enabled them to perform, acquainted them throughly both with the End of his Departure, and with the Benefits of his Return.

Our Saviour, when he gave his Apostles Commission to go *Preach the Gospel of his Kingdom through the World*, had consider'd throughly the Difficulties of the Work, and the Weakness of the Instruments, and the mighty Disadvantages with which they undertook it; and therefore had commanded them to defer the setting out upon it, and not to stir from *Jerusalem*, till they had receiv'd *the Promise of the Spirit from the Father*, Acts 1. 14. and been sufficiently endued with Power from on High.

And accordingly, when the Time was come that they should publickly assume their Character, and set forward on their Journey, He graciously condescended by the Deputation of his Spirit to assist at the Solemnity, to proclaim their Stile, and demand the World's Attention to a Character, the very Inauguration to which was so Miraculous and Astonishing.

And that the Presence of his Spirit stopt not here, but follow'd them whithersoever they went, and was *with them always, even unto the end of* their Labours, is abundantly manifest from the Miracles and Success that so remarkably attended them.

For

For whoever shall observe the swift and sudden Progress of the Gospel (like the Light to which it sometimes is compar'd) scarce shot from one Extremity, but extended to the other; how without the usual Assistances of Violence or Persuasion, it incredibly forc'd its way through the Lusts, and Prejudices, and Powers that oppos'd it, must acknowledge the Hand of God himself in the Weakness of his Instruments, and the Work accomplish'd not *by Might*, nor *by Power*, but *by the Spirit of the Lord.*

For had not *the Arm of the Lord* been undeniably *reveal'd*, who (do we think) could have *believed a Report* so amazing in its Circumstances, and so unartful in its Delivery? How could whole Multitudes with one accord, have *given heed to the things which the Apostles spake*, had they not *heard and seen the Miracles which they did*, Acts 8. 6. as strange, and as unaccountable as the Resurrection they attested? Or how (do we believe) could Men, like the Apostles, untaught to argue, and afraid to suffer, have been brought on the sudden to dispute and dye so bravely for the Gospel, had not that better Advocate, *the Spirit himself made Intercession for them*? Had not the Holy Ghost the Comforter stood by them in their Trials, and refresh'd them with his Presence; that as *the Sufferings of Christ abounded* in them, *so might their Consolation also abound through Christ*, 2 Cor. 1. 5.

As long as these Extraordinary *Demonstrations of the Spirit* were necessary, so long were they continued by our Saviour to his Church. 'Twas not till the Books of Scripture were finish'd and compil'd, and a standing Rule of Faith and Manners *deliver'd to the Saints*, that the Gift of an Infallible Wisdom depart-

departed from it: Nor did the Power of Miracles it self begin to fail, till they had sufficiently introduc'd the Doctrines they accompany'd, and left it upon the Infidels of all succeeding Ages, either to allow the Gospel the Attestation of its Miracles, or else to account for that (which were it self the greatest) how it could spread and prevail so prodigiously without them.

But Miracles and Inspiration were not always to continue; Men were not always to be taught new Doctrines, nor astonish'd into Conviction: And therefore tho' *the Spirit of the Lord pass'd by* his Prophets in the *Thunder*, and the *Earthquake*, yet was he to *dwell* amongst them in a *stiller Voice*, to address and instruct his Servants in a more reasonable Way, in a way more natural and agreeable to their Faculties; and which, tho it did not proclaim him so loudly as before, might yet in a sufficient still, tho a less perceptible manner, assure them of his Presence.

There is not now-a-days, we must confess, in every Minister that Share of Knowledge, to preserve his Judgment from Error, and his Memory from Unfaithfulness: The *Signs of an Apostle* are not now so astonishing, as once they were: But *even unto us*, the present Ministers of the Christian Church, *Unto us*, I say, my Brethren, *some Grace is given: I think*, and am persuaded that we also, we the Lawful Pastors of the Church of *England*, *have the Spirit of God*; not less of that Spirit, we hope, than many of our Adversaries, because less bold and confident in our Pretensions to it.

We pretend not indeed (as we know some others do) to an Infallible Assistance, which they who challenge it the loudest, can neither tell us where we are

are to fix, nor how we are to use it, and by the grossest Mistakes and Superstitions of their own, have abundantly convinc'd us that they want it most. We envy not *Rome* the Glory of its Miracles, as false as the Doctrines they were invented to support.

We leave to those bold Impostors the Credit of their Prophecies, who have since themselves outliv'd the Detection of their Forgeries; much less dare we take those indecent Liberties with the Blessed Spirit, which those of the Separation so audaciously practise; and which, after all their boasted Familiarity, they are so very little the better for, that, for any thing we can see, they are neither the Wiser in their Understandings, nor the more Charitable in their Tempers.

No; far, very far from us, my Brethren, be the Sin, and the Confidence of such unjustifiable Pretensions; as undoubted Arguments, whereever they are found, of a false Religion, as they are scandalous and hurtful to the Honour of the True one.

But this, I hope, without Arrogance may be said, if in these latter Ages of the Christian Church, there be yet sufficient Manifestation of the *Spirit* in the *Knowledge*, the *Piety*, and the *Courage* of its Ministers, There is not one of these, in which the Church of *England* is at this Day, inferior to any other whatsoever in the Christian World; None, in which she does not excel many, in which she does not equal all.

In a just, and regular Interpretation of the Gospel (and we of this Church pretend not to reveal one) what Divines have labour'd more successfully than our own? In what Order of Men are the

Gifts and Graces of the Spirit more conspicuous, than in the Regular Ministry of our Establish'd Church; where the Virtues of much the greater Part are eminent, and excel; and where even the most unworthy are not yet so bad, as those very Men themselves could wish them, who complain so loudly that they are no better? And then for the Zeal, and Patience, and Courage of our Ministry, (*for these also worketh the self same Spirit*) we have been more than once oblig'd to our Enemies for Occasions to distinguish them, who seem all along to have taken particular Care, that *as we have abounded in every thing besides*, in *Faith*, in *Knowledge*, in *Utterance*, and the like, so we should more especially *abound in these Graces also*, 1 Cor. 1. 5.

And as long as we are thus assur'd of the Benefits of this Assistance, we may be humbly confident, there will never be wanting in many of God's Ministers, a Spirit of Wisdom to defend his Gospel, and, if Occasion should require, of Resolution to suffer for it.

The Third and Last Advantage to the Church from our Saviour's Promise to it in my Text, is, that immediate Providence and Protection, by which he has graciously undertaken to provide for its Security.

Our Saviour, when he first establish'd his Kingdom upon Earth, so *laid the Foundations of it, that it never should be mov'd at any time: Upon this Rock*, saith he, Matth. 16. 18. *will I build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*

Upon this Rock it stood, and sustained the dreadful Shock of the Death and Sufferings of the Son of God himself, when Men and Devils had successfully

fully conspir'd to *smite the Shepherd*, and *disperse the Sheep*: Even then God suffer'd not those *Powers* to prevail; Hell could no more destroy the *Church*, than detain its *Founder*, who quickly rose again to take Possession of the Power he was then immediately to receive for its Advantage, and even now continues to employ in its Defence.

Upon this Rock it stood, unshaken and unmov'd by the restless Violence of Ten successive Persecutions: The Providence of God still mercifully so contriving it, that those very Things which were intended to *suppress* it, should *fall out rather to the Furtherance of the Gospel*, Phil. 1. 12. So that the very *fierceness of Men* was many times *converted to his Praise*, and *Persecutors* themselves to be *Preachers* and Defenders of *the Faith which they had once destroy'd.*

Upon this Rock it stood, and oppos'd the Flood of Ignorance and Barbarity, which in succeeding Ages advanc'd to overwhelm it: And altho' in that dark and tedious *Night*, *the Enemy came*, and *sowed* some *Tares*, and corrupted the Purity of that *Faith which was at first deliver'd*, nevertheless *the Foundations* of God's Church *remained sure*: God would not *suffer the Word of Truth to be taken utterly out of her Mouth*, Psal. 119. 43. neither the Regular Succession of her Ministry, nor the more essential Articles of her Faith to fail.

Upon this Rock it stands, and we trust it will ever stand, amended and reform'd from the Errors and Corruptions, with which those Times of Ignorance had insensibly polluted her.

And indeed when we *walk round about our* Sion, *and mark well her Bulwarks, and tell the Towers thereof*, Ps. 48. 13. when with a pleasing Reflection we survey

the *Alms*, and the *Prayers*, and the Victories of its *DEFENDER*, and (*tho the Love of* many be *waxed cold*) the vehement Desire that still survives in most, in all *Good* Men for its Prosperity : When we consider this, I say, and beyond all this, That *the Foundations of our* Sion *are*, like that of Old, *upon the holy Hills*, and that the *Word of the Lord* himself *hath tryed her*; Psal. 87. 1. Why may we not believe her establish'd, like the Mount of God it self, which may not be remov'd, but standeth fast for ever ?

But neither would I here be so misunderstood, as though this Promise of our Saviour to his Church in general, might be so far extended to any in particular, as for ever to secure it in the Purity of its Worship, and the Prosperity of its Condition. The Churches of *Jerusalem*, and of *Antioch*, (we know) as ancient and as flourishing as they once have been, are now no more. Even *Rome* it self, who vainly calls her self *the Mother of Us All*, has err'd, and is corrupt. Our own Church too (as *safe* and as *glorious* as we believe her now) has been sometimes desolate: The Devil has been more than once let loose upon her, to slay her Prophets, and defile her Sanctuaries, and *all but her Life has been put into his Hands.*

And therefore, I shall just beg Leave, my Venerable Brethren, affectionately to recommend to you two or three Particulars, in which, if I mistake not, the very Being of Religion, and both the Honour and Security of the Church we are related to, is more immediately concern'd.

And the first of these is a becoming Zeal, and Concern for the Honour of Your Character.

Great Art and Endeavour we know, has been us'd

us'd of late to persuade the World, notwithstanding all that Scripture and Antiquity have asserted to the contrary, that the Church of Christ derives no Spiritual Powers from above, but such as are purely, both in the Exercise and Original of them, dependent on the Temporal.

But sure, my Brethren, if we were *of this World, the World would love its own*, John 15. 18. Were we indeed, *as we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm of us*, the Creatures of its Power, or could we but persuade our selves to be the Flatterers of its Wickedness, no doubt it would use us better than it does. 'Tis plainly because we are *not of this World, that it hateth us*; and for the very same Reason we know it was, that *it hated* our Lord and Master Christ himself, *before it hated us*.

And now were the Strength of our Enemies in their Arguments only, we were safe enough: Scripture and Antiquity, (if they may be the Judges) declare loudly on our side, and speak abundantly enough to make good our Character. But how, alas! shall we convince those Men from Scripture, who deny the *Scriptures* themselves to be *the Word of God*? How shall we persuade them to *honour the Servants*, who will not *reverence the Son*? Matt. 21. 37. As long as *Prophets*, and *Apostles*, and the *Son of God himself* are treated at this rate, 'tis plain what Usage the *present Ministers* of the Gospel must expect. Had these Men *believ'd but Moses* and the Apostles, *they would have believed* us; *but if they believe not their Writings, how then*, my Brethren, shall they *believe our Words*? John 5. 47.

From what Lewd Principles these prevailing Errors spring, we may easily discover, and what the Consequences of them too must be, if supported long

long by *Numbers* and *Impunity*. Sure, in a Country that calls it self *Christian*, (and Thanks be to God, we retain *the Name* amongst us still) a Time will come (we trust it is already come,) when these Enormities shall be thought to deserve the Censures of the Government, and *Infidelity*, amongst others, *an Iniquity to be punished by the Judge.*

In the mean time, my Brethren, Let us for our Parts behave our selves, as becomes the Ministers of God, with a just regard to the Character we sustain, and the Sovereign we represent. Let us remember that 'tis not our *own Glory*, but *the Glory of Him that sent us*, Mark 11. 28. that we are now contending for: We know *what Authority we have*, and *who it is* that *gave us this Authority*: And let these Miscreants also at their Peril know, that they are *so to account of us as Ministers of Christ*, and *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*, 1 Cor. 4. 1. Nay, and tho' we should *boast somewhat more* of our Authority, we *should not stretch our selves beyond our Measure*, 2 *Cor.* 10. 14. (And if *for once*, as the Apostle speaks, 2 *Cor.* 12. 4. *we are become Fools in glorying*, *'tis they compel us*, They by whom we ought to have been *commended*,) Let them therefore know, that we are *Ambassadors for Christ, to pray and beseech Men*, to beseech even *Them*, (if it be not yet too late) *that they would be reconcil'd to God*; and sent with the same Proposals of Peace and Salvation, which himself in Person deliver'd to the World.

He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not Man, but God, 1 Thess. 4. 8. who fails not, we may be sure, to resent the Injury, and has threatned to *revenge* it. *In as much as they have done it unto the least of these* his Ministers, *they have done unto him.*

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Another Particular I would beg Leave to remind you of, is a plain uncorrupted Sincerity in the Preaching of the Gospel.

As soon as our Saviour had given Order to his Apostles, *to go teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*; He immediately adds, *Matt.* 28. 20. *Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.*

A Preacher of the Gospel must neither soften the Severities of its Doctrines, nor the Necessities of Obedience. He must not artfully strike in with a fashionable Vice, nor a prevailing Error; much less may he wantonly deal out God's Pardon to the Impenitent, nor make a Compliment of Salvation to the Quality of the Criminal. This sure, if any thing, is what the Apostle calls, 2 Cor. 4. 2. to *walk in Craftiness*, to *corrupt the Word of God, and to handle it deceitfully.* So that if the greatest Prince or Monarch upon Earth should send to any one of us, as *Balak* did unto another Prophet, *Numb.* 22. 38. to *come*, and *curse* what God had *bless'd*, or unwarrantably to *bless* what God before had *curs'd*, and should offer to *promote us to the greatest Wealth and Honour* for our Pains, we must answer him with *Balaam, The Word that the Lord hath put into my Mouth, That*, and that only *will I speak*: 'Tis *the Lord withholds me from this Honour*, and I dare not accept of it at the Expence of my Fidelity.

Upon this Principle no doubt it was, that our Saviour and his Apostles after him, proceeded in their Ministry. *I have not spoken of my self*, saith our Blessed Saviour, *John* 12. 49. but *the Father which sent me, he hath given me a Commandment what I should say, and what I should do.* And 'twas a Character his very Enemies themselves were observ'd to give him, That *he regarded not the Persons of Men, but spake the Word of God in Truth*, Matt. 22. 16.

Had now the first and earliest Preachers of the Gospel, but luckily understood the Modern Arts of *qualifying* some ungrateful Truths, and of *concealing* others;

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of giving the plausible Names of *Temper* to *Indifferency*, and of *Moderation* to *Hypocrisy*, no doubt they might have easily sav'd themselves from Death; perhaps they might have been *consider'd* for their Pains: But then there had been an End at once of the Gospel they were to preach, and of the Church they were to settle; which can no more be *preserv'd*, than it could at first be *establish'd*, without the *Zeal*, and the *Steddiness*, and the *Sincerity* of its Ministers.

And let us in the Last Place, my Brethren, (as the Apostle advises us) *take heed not only to our Doctrine, but* also *to our selves*: Let us not content our selves with being *moderately* good, but *let us strive to* excel, *to the edifying of many*, 1 Cor. 14. 12. And then shall we successfully *teach God's Ways unto the Wicked, and Sinners also shall be converted unto him*, Psal. 51 13. Then *shall all Men know*, and the most Infidel confess, *that God is in us of a Truth*, 1 Cor. 14. 25. *By our Fruits they shall know us*; by our more eminent Sanctity, by our Exemplary Diligence, and our Universal Charity, that we are Sons and Ministers of the best of Churches in the Christian World.

Wherefore, *Holy Brethren, Partakers of this Heavenly Calling, consider the Apostle and High-Priest of our Profession, Jesus Christ*; and let us, *like him, be Holy, Harmless, Undefiled, separated from Sinners, and faithful in all things unto him that hath appointed us*, Heb. 3. 1. That so when he shall come again to visit the Shepherds of his Flock, and the Stewards of his Family, we may *give up our Accounts with Joy*, and present unto him that Part of his Church committed to our Care, as pure and as unspotted as this imperfect State would suffer it, no longer now to be torn with *Heresy*, nor defil'd by *Sin*; but *to be*, like his own, *a Glorious Body, without Spot or Wrinkle*, or *any such thing*; its Members united to themselves, and to their Head, in perfect *Love* and *Knowledge*, and the *Fulness of that Joy which proceeds from him that filleth all in all*.

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